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# Rural Cluster Subdivisions

Assistance Bulletin

# #44

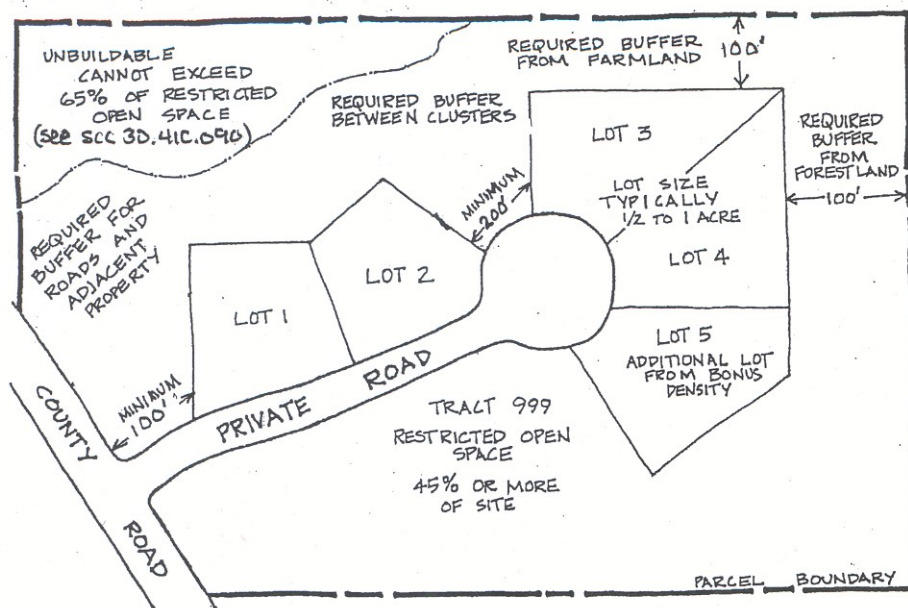
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Keyword: Assistance Bulletins

## What is a Rural Cluster Subdivision?

A Rural Cluster Subdivision (RCS) is an alternative to standard subdivision or short subdivision development in certain rural and resource areas in unincorporated Snohomish County. The RCS technique allows a developer to group all potential lots into compact clusters of smaller lots, surrounded by designated open space encompassing 45 percent or more of the overall site. RCSs are awarded a density bonus of 15-35 percent, depending on the developer's commitment to set aside open space.

**RURAL CLUSTER SUBDIVISION**  
(FIG 1 - NOT TO SCALE)



## What is "restricted open space" and what can it be used for?

Restricted open space is permanent open space in an RCS. Restricted open space is required in order to receive the residential density and bonus density (where eligible) that is allowed by the zone and General Policy Plan (GPP) designation. No more than 65 percent of the total restricted open space may consist of unbuildable lands. Restricted open space is designated in separate tracts and can be used for buffering, critical area protection, selective timber

harvesting agriculture, mineral resource use, passive recreation, community wells and drainfields (subject to Snohomish Health District approval), storm water detention systems, and other related activities as listed in SCC 30.41C.090.

The ownership of the restricted open space may be held in several ways:

- Conveyance to a public agency or county-approved non-profit organization;
- Control by a homeowners association; or
- Retention by the original landowner, under certain limited conditions.

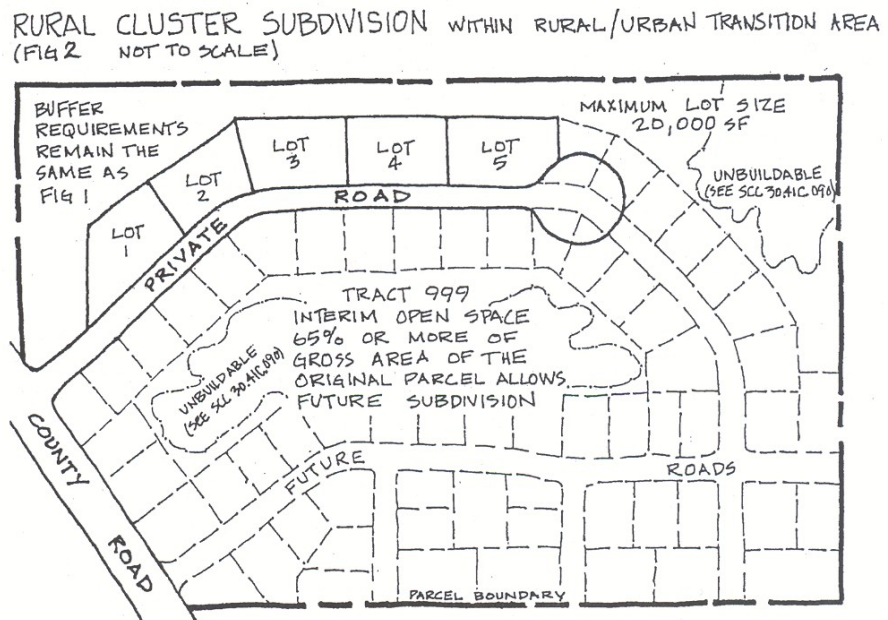
*This assistance bulletin is intended to provide general information and guidance, and should not be considered all inclusive.*

### What is “interim open space” and how can it be used?

“Interim open space” is open space that is required in RCSs located in Rural/Urban Transition areas (RUTAs). These areas are not subject to the restricted open space requirements unless otherwise specified.

RCSs are optional RUTAs, which are adjacent to an outside of Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). They do offer one benefit, however: the opportunity to subdivide the interim open space once it is located within a UGA.

The interim open space must be configured to include sufficient future buildable area, allowing future lot configuration with adjacent building envelopes on each lot, and accommodate future roads. See the figure below.



## Is my property eligible for a Rural Cluster Subdivision?

Rural cluster subdivisions are allowed in the Forestry (F), forestry and Recreations (F&R), Mineral Conservation (MC), and Rural Resource Transition 10 Acre (RRT-10) zones and, in limited areas only the Rural Five Acre (R-5), rural Conservation (RC), and Rural Diversification (RD) zones, subject to the rural and resource land use designations and policies in the Snohomish county GMA Comprehensive Plan/General Policy Plan (GPP). The policies and land use designations in the GPP help determine whether a parcel is eligible for clustering even though the parcel may be zoned f< F&R, MC, RRT-10, R-5, RC or RD.

To see if your property is eligible for rural cluster subdivision and what residential density you are allowed, you need to determine:

- If your property is zoned R-5, RRT-10, F, F&R, MC, RC or RD;
  - What is the GPP land use designation for your property; and
  - Which of the following combinations of zoning and GPP land use designations would qualify your property for rural cluster subdivision:
1. R-5 zone/RR-5 or RR designation: Lands zoned R-5 and designated Rural Residential -5 or Rural Residential by the GPP qualify for an RCS with a residential density of 1 lot per 200,000 sq. ft. (approximately 4.6 acres) and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space. There is an opportunity for a density bonus up to 35% if additional restricted open space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.
  2. R-5 or RC zones/LCF designation: lands zoned R-5 or RC by the GPP qualify for an RCS with residential density at 1 lot per 200,000 sq. ft. and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space. There is an opportunity for a density bonus up to 35% if additional restricted open space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.
  3. R-5, RC or RD zones/RR-10-RT plan designations: lands zoned R-5, RC or RD and designated Rural Residential-10 (Resource Transition) (RR-10-RT) by the GPP qualify for an RCS with a residential density of 1 lot per 200,000 sq. ft. and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space. There is an opportunity for a density bonus up to 35% if additional restricted open space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.
  4. F zone/RR-L plan designation: lands zoned F and designated Low Density Rural Residential (RR-L) by the GPP qualify for an RCS with a residential density of 1 lot per 20 acres and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space. There is an opportunity for a density bonus of up to 35% if additional restricted opens space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.

***Specific regulations governing land use and development are contained within Snohomish County Code Title 30. You can view these regulations by going to: [WWW.Snoco.org](http://WWW.Snoco.org) And click on County Code***

5. RRT-10 zone/RR-10-RT plan designation: lands zoned RRT-10 and designated RR-10-RT by the GPP qualify for an RCS with a residential density of 1 lot per 10 acres and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space there is an opportunity for a density bonus up to 35% if additional restricted open space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.
6. F&R zone/RR, RR-10-RT, RR-L RD plan designations; Lands zoned F&R and designated Rural Residential (RR), Rural Residential -10 (Resource Transition (RR-10-RT) Low Density Rural Residential (RR-L), or Rural Residential RD (RR-RD) by the GPP qualify for an RCS with a residential density of 1 lot per 5 acres and a minimum density bonus of 15% when a minimum of 45% of the site is contained in restricted open space. There is an opportunity for a density bonus up to 35% if additional restricted open space is proposed for up to 65% of the site.

### Reference Tables

TABLE 30.41C.090  
RESTRICTED OPEN SPACE AREA REQUIREMENTS

Zones & comprehensive plan designations	(1) Forestry (F) zone (2) Forestry & Recreational (F&R) zone (3) Mineral conservation zone (MC) with or without MRO	(1) Rural 5-acre zone in RR-5 & RR-10(RT) without MRO (2) Rural Resource Transition 10-acre zone, rural conservation (RC) zone 7 Rural diversification zones in RR-10(RT) designation with MRO	(1) Rural 5-acre zone in RR (RR Basic) designation without MRO
Minimum restricted open space	60%	45%	45%
Minimum restricted open space (natural resource lands)	60%	60%	60%
Notes: The Mineral Resource Lands Overlay (MRO) is a comprehensive plan designation overlay which overlaps other designations. Where the MRO overlaps the R-5 zone, residential subdivision is prohibited on any portion of a parcel located within the MRO under SCC 30.32C.150			

**SNOHOMISH  
COUNTY**

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[www.Snoco.org/  
departments/pds](http://www.Snoco.org/departments/pds)



Table 30.41C.130  
BULK REGULATION REQUIREMENTS

Zones & comprehensive plan designations	(1) forestry zone (F) with or without MRO (2) Forestry & Recreation zone (F&R) without or without MRO (3) Mineral conservation zone (MC) (4) Rural 5-Acre zone in RR-5 & RR-10(RT) designation without MRO designation (5) Rural Resource Transition (RRT) 10-acres zone, rural Conservation zone (RC) & rural Diversification zone in RR-10(RT) designation with MRO
Maximum lot coverage	35%
Minimum lot width at building site	125 feet
Minimum lot size	20,000 square feet
Minimum front yard setback <sup>1,2</sup>	20 feet, plus at least a 10 foot variation in setbacks on lots adjacent to one another
Minimum rear yard setback	5 feet
Minimum side yard setback <sup>1</sup>	25 feet
Minimum setback for residential lots from designated adjacent agriculture, forest and mineral lands	100 feet

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with 20.91L.170, corner lots have two front yard setbacks.

<sup>2</sup> pursuant SCC 30.41C.070(1)(d), the variations in front yard setbacks shall be at least 10 feet on lots adjacent to each other. Variety in lot size and configuration is also encouraged to avoid creating uniformity, which is characteristic of urban development.

Table 30.41C.140  
RUTA BULK REGULATIONS AND INTERIM OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

	Applies to all zoning classifications and parcels underlying a RUTA as designated on Snohomish County GMA comprehensive Plan Future Land
Minimum interim open space	65%
Maximum lot coverage	35%
Minimum lot frontage on a public or private street	80 feet
Minimum lot size	See SCC 30.23.220
Maximum lot size	20,000 square feet
Minimum front yard setback <sup>1</sup>	20 feet
Minimum rear yard setback	5 feet
Minimum side yard setback <sup>1</sup>	10 feet
Minimum setback for single family residential/ duplex lots from adjacent agriculture, forest and	100 feet
<sup>1</sup> In accordance with 30.91L.170, corner lots have two front yard setbacks	

**Please review the land use and development regulations contained within Snohomish County Code Title 30 in their entirety prior to making any decisions regarding purchase, use and/or development of your property. While Planning & Development Services staff are here to provide you with general guidance and information related to land use and development, we cannot provide you with specifics regarding design and use potential for your property. Please consult a land use professional to assist you with that.**